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# Show and Tell: Writing the academic argument within the field of visual communication

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### **Show and Tell: Writing the academic argument within the field of visual communication**

Writing is an intrinsic part of the thinking process, but is unfairly foregrounded as the main mechanism for submitting academic research in the visual arts. The process of practice-led research is an integration of writing-thinking and making-thinking, as written and visual sources go in and both written and practical thinking processes grapple with them. The argument arising from this process is reflected in both artwork produced and the writing that articulates the criteria by which it is to be judged, yet the written thesis is looked to as the less sharp but more plausible location of the argument (to paraphrase Price, 2006). Which is not right! Writing, if privileged over images, dictates the location of the argument and also the nature of the arguments that can be made.

It is, however, an opportunity for graphic design and illustration researchers to use their skills in visual communication to *demonstrate* and not simply *describe* their argument in the written thesis – to make the written document performative (Haseman 2006). I will show examples of performative arguments from graphic design and illustration to substantiate this point, and argue that embracing these principles contributes to a broader shift in what is expected of practice and its capacity to communicate an argument. These create precedents for future doctoral candidates to reference when they challenge the academy's definition of the vehicular "meme" in which to circulate new knowledge (Barrett 2007), thus reaching a potentially wider audience of practitioners and non-academics and working towards a performative paradigm for creative arts research.

### **References**

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